Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Annual Accountability Report for the Fiscal Year 2010-2011

Report DNR 2011-03
July 2011

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1 Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Department of Natural Resources, for the year ended March 31, 2011, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Natural Resources' Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year 2010-2011. The reporting of Department of Natural Resources outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by department management and staff.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of Department of Natural Resources management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Natural Resources' 2010-2011 Statement of Mandate.

Minister - Charlie Parker

Deputy Minister - Duff Montgomerie

2 Message From The Minister

I am pleased to present the Accountability Report of the Department of Natural Resources for 2010-11. The department has had a number of accomplishments during the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2011 and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few.

It was a busy year for the dedicated staff at Natural Resources. Final steps are being taken to complete a natural resources strategy for the province with a view to providing it to Nova Scotians in the near future. Earlier in the year, the second phase of the three phase strategy development process was completed. The second phase report, A Natural Balance: Working Toward Nova Scotia's Natural Resource's Strategy, was released on May 7, 2010. I want to thank the members of the Steering Panel and the four Panels of Expertise - for biodiversity, forests, geological resources, and parks - for the time and expertise they provided during the second phase.

Following the release of the phase 2 report, department staff began the third and final phase, which is the preparation of the actual strategy. The strategy, when complete, will incorporate the citizen values from phase 1, the strategic directions and the high-level recommendations received from phase 2, and the six strategic directions that will form the basis of future forestry policy. The six strategic directions were released in December 2010. Aboriginal consultations, budget discussions, and feedback from reviews by key interested groups have all been part of the strategy development process.

The development of the natural resources strategy has moved forward methodically and well, thanks to the concern and contributions of many groups and individuals. A great deal of work has been done to help ensure Nova Scotia is equipped with a comprehensive strategy to guide its natural resources management through the next decade. My sincere thanks goes out to all contributors for their efforts.

The strategy will mark a time of transformation in our province. It will take a new and balanced approach to resource management to ensure that the province's natural resources are sustained for our collective economic, environmental and social benefit. Collaboration and partnerships, research and knowledge-sharing, and focused outreach will be integral parts of the new strategy.

While the effort devoted to the strategy development was considerable, there were significant accomplishments made by the department in other areas as well, during the past fiscal year. In the past year, Natural Resources staff have:

- worked to support the designation of Sable Island as a national park;
- acted to deal with aggressive coyotes that threaten human safety;
- released six strategic directions that will be the basis for future forestry policy;

- continued upgrading several provincial parks with funding support from the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Stimulus Fund; and
- completed land purchases that increase the Crown land base or will help the province meet the 12% land protection goal in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

As we reflect on these accomplishments and look forward to implementing the new natural resources strategy, it is clear that good progress is being made by working with Nova Scotians who care about our natural resources.

Honourable Charlie Parker
Minister of Natural Resources

3 Financial Results

Financial information is provided in the table shown below based on the department's organizational structure.

Department of Natural Resources Budget Context			
	2010-11		
	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Program and Service Area	**$'000**	**$'000**	**$'000**
Senior Management	444	365	(79)
Corporate Services Unit	4,510	3,681	(829)
Renewable Resources	13,791	15,521	1,730
Mineral Resources	3,783	3,818	35
Regional Services	64,678	62,520	(2,158)
Planning Secretariat	4,936	4,656	(280)
Land Services	3,299	3,215	(84)
Total - Departmental Expenses	**95,441**	**93,776**	**(1,665)**
Salary and Employee Benefits	55,051	52,916	(2,135)
Operating Costs	24,383	26,427	2,044
Grants and Contributions	16,687	19,229	2,542
Gross Expenses	96,121	98,572	2,451
Less: Chargeable to other Depts	(680)	(4,751)	(4,071)
Less: Chargeable to TCA	---	(45)	(45)
Total - Departmental Expenses	**95,441**	**93,776**	**(1,665)**
Ordinary Recoveries	3,520	6,090	2,570
Fees and Other Charges	1,953	2,215	262
Departmentally Funded Staff (FTEs)	**844**	**758**	**(86)**

4 Performance Measures

The department has identified a number of performance measures that help track success in meeting our goals. Information on each measure is provided in an appendix to this document. A brief description is provided that indicates what each measure tells us, where we are now (2010-11 results if available), and where we want to be (future target values and target years). The data for each measure is generated within the department or is from surveys conducted by the Public Service Commission.

The department revised its current set of performance measures beginning with the measures that were reported in the 2007-08 Business Plan. There are significantly fewer measures and they are directly aligned with the department's goals, as opposed to the previous set of measures, which were grouped by core business areas.

The department recognizes that a more comprehensive performance tracking system is required. When the natural resources strategy is approved and in place, the department intends to undertake a revamping of our performance measures. A method of tracking and reporting on progress in the implementation of the strategy will be one potential source of new performance measures. Another potential source will be measures developed to better monitor and report on the things Nova Scotians identified as being important during the citizen engagement and stakeholder engagement phases of the strategy development process.

The following pages provide explanations of the department's performance measures that were included in the 2010-11 Statement of Mandate.

4.1 Natural Resources Stewardship Training

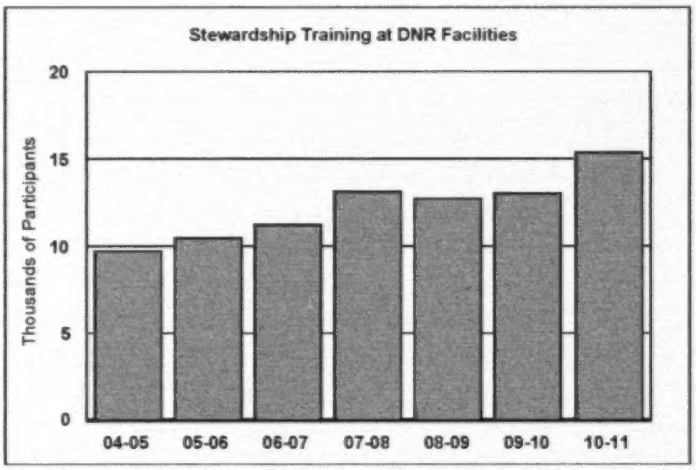
Providing natural resources stewardship training to the public, educators and youth and helping them to understand relevant issues promotes sound natural resources stewardship. It is also important to expose these groups to important stewardship concepts that they may use and pass along to others. The desired outcome is knowledgeable teachers and youth.

What does the measure tell us?

The measure reflects the number of teachers, adult leaders, students and youth who have participated in one of the natural resources programs through either the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park or the Natural Resources Education Centre (NREC) annually. At the Wildlife Park training is delivered on-site in two classrooms in combination with the captive indigenous wildlife at the Park and is an integral part of the provincial science curriculum. Webfoot (wetlands) education programs through Ducks Unlimited Canada have been added to the complement of nature based education programs offered at the Wildlife Park. The NREC programs involve pre- and post-visit activities as well as interactive activities as part of the visit to the Centre, and outreach activities at other events / locations. As a result of the visits, participation in the programs and attendance at the events, individuals should gain a heightened understanding of natural resource issues which will contribute to the development of a stewardship ethic.

Where are we now?

During 2010-11, there were 15,381 individuals who participated in training through either the Wildlife Park or the NREC, an increase of 18.0% from the previous year. One reason for the increase was additional outreach events that provided access to more individuals.



Where do we want to be?

The department's target for this measure was 13,500 individuals for 2010-11. An increased effort is being placed on reaching teachers, students, youth and youth educators who reside outside of the core service area (within a one hour drive of the two facilities) through distance-learning support, in-service training, and outreach activities. Increases in the price of gasoline and diesel fuel have a negative impact on the number of visitors to these two facilities, as travel becomes more expensive.

4.2 Required Value of Silviculture on Private and Industrial Lands Completed

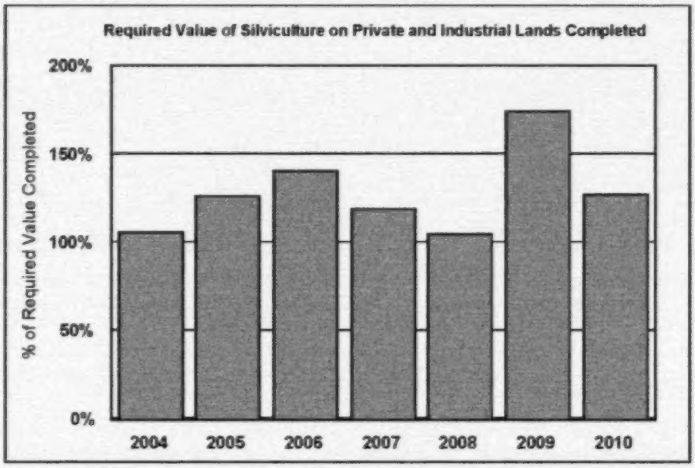
Wood supply sustainability can be managed effectively through an aggressive silviculture program. The department monitors wood harvesting and forecasts long-term wood supply by incorporating both harvesting and silviculture data into the forecast. During the last decade there has been much pressure placed on private woodlots to support the provincial demand for wood. Maintaining an adequate level of silviculture will help to provide for a future supply of wood on private woodlots. The desired outcome is the effective management of wood resource supply.

What does this measure tell us?

The measure helps to explain whether the level of silviculture activity being reported by wood buyers meets or exceeds the required amount (as per the requirements of the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). A ratio of 100% means that the level of silviculture reported equals the amount of silviculture activity required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.

Where are we now?

During the calendar year 2010, figures indicate that approximately 9.6 million silviculture credits were required and about 12.2 million credits were claimed (which included 1.2 million administrative credits). As a result, completed silviculture was 127% of the amount required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.



Where do we want to be?

The department's target for this measure for 2010 was 100% or greater (this measure is calculated on a calendar year basis). As long as this measure exceeds 100%, the amount of actual silviculture work being claimed is greater than the amount which is required (under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). Each year the target for this measure will remain at 100% or greater.

4.3 Endangered and Threatened Species with Recovery Plans in Place

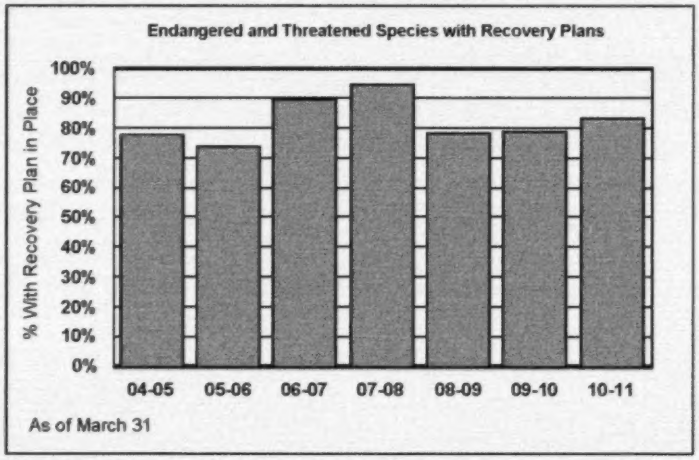
The department is committed to the conservation and protection of species at risk, provincially and nationally, through the *Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act* and the *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*.

What does the measure tell us?

The measure is an indicator of how much work is being done to restore the health of endangered and threatened species. Recovery plans are the focal instrument for addressing the recovery needs for species at risk and guide governments, recovery teams and others, in their conservation efforts, and are now being prepared as required by the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans establish, for each endangered and threatened species, what needs to be done, how much it will cost, when it will be done and who will do the work. The plans also set goals for what is required to down-list a species at risk and establish a strategy for attaining these goals. To down-list a species means to move it to a lower risk category. New species are listed periodically under the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans are required to be in place for each endangered species within one year after the species was listed, and within two years for those species listed as being threatened.

Where are we now?

As of March 31, 2011, 24 species were listed as either endangered or threatened. Of these 24 species, all 24 of them were required to have a recovery plan in place by March 31, 2011 and 20 of them, or 83%, did have a recovery plan in place as of that date.



Where do we want to be?

Our annual target is to have required recovery plans in place for all (100%) species listed under the Act. Completion is, in part, dependent on the resources and timelines. Revisions to completed plans are also occurring periodically in order to incorporate new information and knowledge that becomes available. Since we have been assessing species under the *Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act* only the Peregrine Falcon has shown significant recovery and was down-listed from Threatened to Vulnerable in 2007.

4.4 Compliance with the *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations*

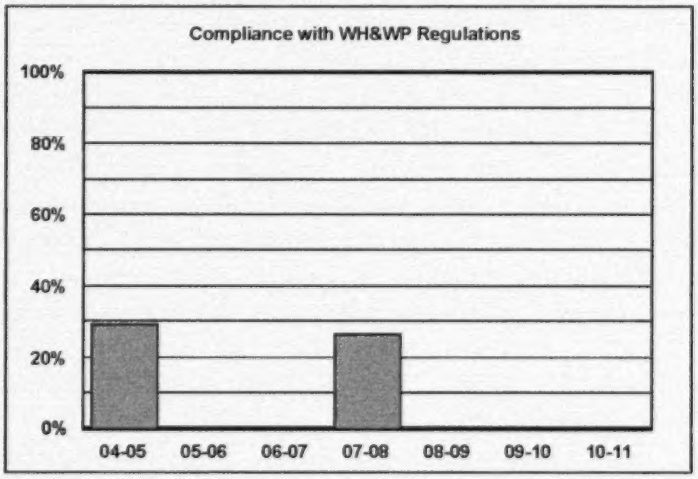
The *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* (under the *Forests Act*) were developed to maintain fish and wildlife habitats and water quality in and near forest harvesting operations on all lands. There are three requirements: reduced harvesting along watercourses in Special Management Zones, clumps of living trees left standing in the harvest site, and large pieces of woody debris left evenly scattered in the site.

What does the measure tell us?

The percentage of harvesting operations meeting the legal standards shows how well natural environments are being protected and the forest operators' knowledge of, and commitment to, environmental stewardship. A sample of harvest sites is used to measure compliance with the Regulations. The desired outcome is conservation of ecosystem function.

Where are we now?

The Regulations came into effect early in 2002. Surveys of harvest sites were done in 2004-05 and 2007-08. The last results, from 2007-08, showed that about 26% of these sites were in full compliance. Undertaking the survey is a significant task that requires about three person-years of staff time. With the development of a natural resources strategy underway, and because the survey results were not expected to show a significant change from the previous survey, a decision was made to not undertake a survey in 2010. It should be noted that harvest sites not in full compliance may be in partial compliance with parts of the Regulations, such the inclusion of legacy clumps or providing special management zones (if required). However full compliance may not have been achieved for reasons such as the legacy clumps that were left not being large enough or that they included the wrong species of trees, while the special management zones may not have been wide enough.



Where do we want to be?

The target for this measure was 75% of all harvest sites in full compliance by 2010-11. The department will increase efforts as the strategy is implemented to raise the level of compliance through both education and enforcement.

4.5 Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That The Department Creates a Safe Work Environment

Outcome - Safe Staff and Workplaces

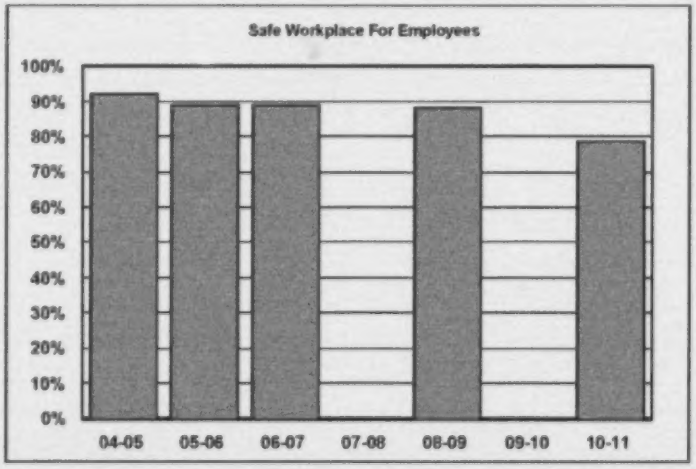
The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the department creates a safe work environment for its employees.

What does the measure tell us?

This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that the department provides a safe work environment for its employees). The desired outcome is safe staff and workplaces.

Where are we now?

The latest survey was administered in March 2011 (no survey was done in 2008 or 2010). The department's result for this question, from the 2011 survey, was 79%, down nine percentage point from the 88% achieved in the March 2009 survey. The 79% result was six percentage points higher than the 73% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies. Even though there was a decline, this was an area of clear strength of the department as a score of 60% to 74% reflects an area of strength and a score of 75% or higher reflects an area of clear strength.



Where do we want to be?

The department had set a target of 89% for the results of the 2011 survey based on the 2007 survey results and 89% is the target for the 2013 survey results. The reasons for the decline in the 2011 result will need to be identified and measures to reverse the trend put in place prior to the next survey.

4.6 Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That They Have Access to Training Opportunities

Outcome - Knowledgeable Staff

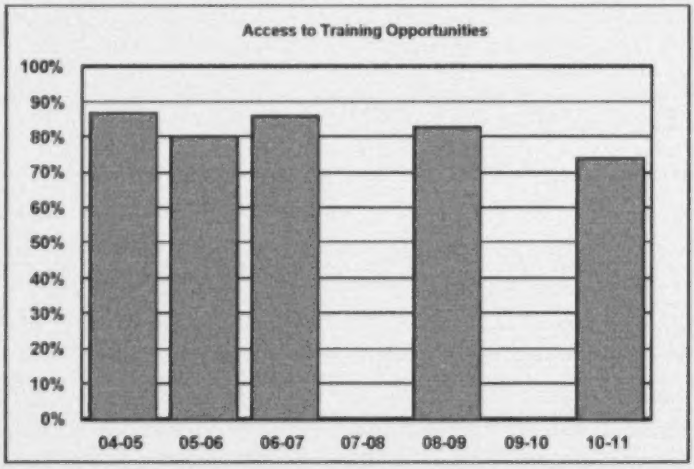
The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the employee has access to training opportunities.

What does the measure tell us?

This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that they have access to training opportunities). The desired outcome is knowledgeable staff.

Where are we now?

The latest survey was administered in March 2011 (no survey was done in 2008 or 2010). The department's result for this question, from the 2011 survey, was 74%, down nine percentage points from the 83% achieved in the March 2009 survey. Although DNR's 2011 result was a decline from the result in 2009, the 74% figure was still twelve percentage points higher than the 62% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies. Even though there was a decline, this was an area of strength for the department as a score of 60% to 74% reflects an area of strength and a score of 75% or higher reflects an area of clear strength.



Where do we want to be?

The department had set a target of 86% for the results of the 2011 survey based on the 2007 survey results and 86% is the target for the 2013 survey results. The reasons for the decline in the 2011 result will need to be identified and measures to reverse the trend put in place prior to the next survey.

5 Supplemental Information

The department has broad responsibilities for the management of biodiversity, forests, geological resources, and provincial parks in the province, as well as the management of Crown lands. Nova Scotia's natural resources provide significant economic, social, heritage, cultural and environmental benefits for all Nova Scotians and are one of the province's features that make it an attractive place to live, do business in, and to visit.

The department's organization chart is presented below. The department consists of five branches, as well as the Resources Corporate Services Unit (RCSU), which provides financial and information technology services to the Department of Natural Resources, several other provincial government departments, and a number of agencies, boards and commissions.